

punch

OR

THE LONDON CHARIVARI



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Charivaria

It may now be disclosed that the Nazi's Annual Invasion of Britain is to be held in the Ukraine this season.

"People in high places can always get as many tomatoes as they want," says a writer. Hence the anxious gaze of comedians towards the gallery.

A German in Spain weighing 21 stone and describing himself as a tourist was found to be a Nazi political agent. However did he infiltrate through?

It has been announced from Verona that Signor MUSSOLINI is sending an Army Division to help the Germans in Russia. Herr HITLER must have known there was a snag somewhere.



"'Short Lease' means a lease which is not a long lease."—*Extract from the Finance Act, 1940; Section 13. 1 (b) Definitions.*

We'd never have guessed.

An agricultural writer states that since eggs have been controlled his hens are laying better. They probably think that an egg a day will keep the poulterer away.

"The company was provided with a sample of the 9d. luncheon consisting of lintel soup, steak and kidney pie, and date pudding."

Northumberland Paper.

To take away the taste.



A correspondent says he once played cricket against GILBERT JESSOP in Rutland. During JESSOP's innings he fielded mostly in Lincolnshire.

"Sweden may be alone in a warring world," says a writer. Well, that's how GRETA GARBO always wanted it.

A paper-chase was held recently by a Midlands athletic club. Owing to the shortage, the procedure nowadays is to release a piece of paper in a stiff breeze and then everybody chases it.

Italy's declaration of war with Russia is not being taken seriously in military circles, as she has not yet started to retire.

Floods, earthquakes, landslides and gales have recently done extensive damage in various parts of the world. Nature is very imitative.

They say one result of the war with Russia is that the Japanese Foreign Secretary is in danger of being run over through crossing the road to shake hands with himself in the middle.



RIBBENTROP, it is now recalled, was unusually silent at the signing of the 1939 Russo-German Friendship Pact. His tongue, as we now know, was in his cheek.

A Berlin broadcaster claims that all members of the Gestapo are fine athletes. There is a feeling of relief in a German home when thunderous knocks on the door merely announce the arrival of an officer anxious to sell tickets for the police sports.

Basic English

I HAVE been reading the glossary of Basic English. It is a quiet amusement for the evening of a very hot day. Basic English has only eight hundred and fifty words. One or two friends of mine have written not very kind things about Basic English in the newspapers because the New Testament has been turned into Basic English, and these people do not always like the words which have been used for the words which were used before. I agree (no I cannot—there is no word for agree)—I take the same side as these friends of mine take about the New Testament. But there is much to be said in support of Basic English in other places. Sometimes it makes what is written more beautiful, sometimes less beautiful; sometimes it makes what is written more long, sometimes more short. But it never makes the sense of what is written more hard to know. Thus, if you wish to say in Basic English "he is a bloodthirsty guttersnipe," you can say bloodthirsty because both blood and thirsty are basic English words, but you cannot say guttersnipe because there is no word for gutter and no word for snipe. You must say "he is a blood-thirsty kind of bird which lives in the most dirty part of the street." This is long but plain. You cannot say "since the recent institution of egg (fish) control, there has been an increasing shortage of eggs (fish)," but you can say "because eggs (fish) are governed, there are no eggs (fish)." This is short and plain. But if you wished to say "Lord Beaverbrook is the Tank Boss" you would have to say "Lord Beaverbrook is the ruler of the men who make the armed machines of steel which are moved across the land by the power of oil." This is long, maybe it is a little too long. But think about this: when the glossary of Basic English shows the different uses of the word *at* it says:

1. The men are *at war* (*work, play, rest*).
2. They were happy *at first*.
3. They were *at a great distance* from their country.
4. They did not go to bed *at night*.
5. *At times* they were covered with small insects.
6. There was some *surprise at* their desire to get back.
7. There were *at least (most)* 1,000 persons at the station.
8. They had the interests of the country *at heart*.

I think that this is beautiful. If there was a word for poem in Basic English (there is not) I should say that it was a poem. It is very like the poems which were written in 1920 and 1921. But that war was a different war.

Many surprises are to be noted in Basic English. If you wish (as many people are now wishing) to say "Some infernal Government Official has flung me out of my flat into the street" you will find that Government and official are both Basic words because they are international words. So are flat and street. But there is no word for infernal and no word for flung (not even for chuck, throw, or hurl), so you have to say "Some Government official whom it would be right to punish for ever in the under-earth* after this life, has caused me to leap (or spring) suddenly from my flat into the street." But the sense is (again) quite clear.

If after this you can get, or take, a new flat, you may say "My new flat is full of men. There are men in every room hammering. Some are hammering cup-boards (Basic com-

pound word), some are hammering floors. Some who have nothing else to hammer are hammering pieces of wood for the sake of hammering. They shout many shouts, they sing many songs, they sing Basic songs, they are becoming more and more in need of drink and I am going more and more off my head." You may even say more than this. You may say "Through the kindness of the General Post Office (Post Office is a Basic word) my telephone number (telephone is an international word) is the same as it was before." But you must not say "Through the inefficiency of the General Post Office my new telephone will not be installed for about a month" because there is no word for inefficiency and no word for install. You must put up with "bad operating" and "put in."

It would be pleasing to write the lease of your new flat in Basic English, and to put the words of your claim for compensation against the Government into Basic English, but there is no word for lease (nor, by the way, for lend), no word for compensation, and no word for claim. The men who made up Basic English must have led very simple lives, or had a pull on the Government. But no, not very simple after all. They put the hard word apparatus into their glossary: they give "a pocket of poison gas" as an example of the use of the word poison. To show how the word "let" may be used they say:

There was a great noise when she *let off the gun*.

She will not *let us into her secret*.

She had been *letting out the skirt* because it had been getting too tight.

They give us autobus, which they say is an international word; they say the same of hysteria, hyæna and hygiene; they say that the stopping has come out of their tooth; they dance to a bad gramophone (international); they have trouble with the boys (and with the authorities), and in many ways it would seem to me that their outlook on life was unduly pessimistic if in their bright glossary there were any such words as pessimistic or undue.

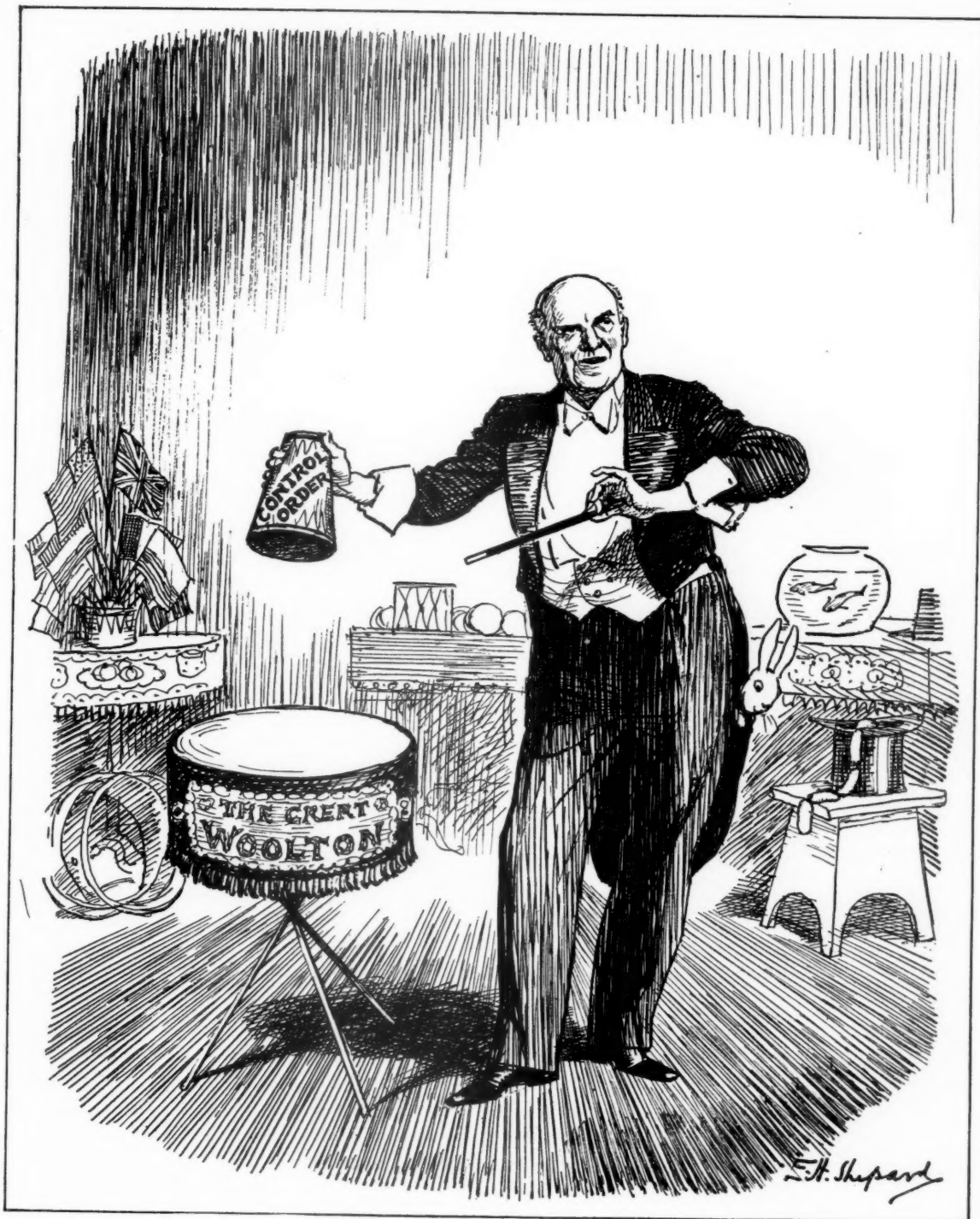
Take "up":

1. At school *dressing up* was one of my greatest pleasures.
2. Now it is hard to get my overcoat *buttoned up*.
3. In a cold country all one's force is *used up* in the attempt to keep warm.
4. Bread has to be *cut (broken) up* for the birds.
5. Even if your house is *shut (locked) up*, the rain may get in.
6. Yesterday there was ice in the bath and the drains got *stopped up*.
7. Get the pipes *fixed up* again before the Spring.
8. The wet places on the walls have to be *touched up*.
9. There is no need to get *worked up* about it.
10. In England, we have to *put up with* small troubles of this sort.

Ah! I thought so. The men have *come up* to my new flat to hammer again. I cannot write, I cannot telephone to the police (international word) any more. But everything that I have written has been written, so far as I was able to write it, in Basic English words which I have copied from the *Basic English Glossary*.

I have to say before I come to an end that the word Glossary is not given by the Glossary of Basic English in the list of words starting with the letter "G." Nor is Basic given under "B." EVOE.

* There are no words in Basic English for heaven, hell, world, find, begin, finish, victory, or defeat.



TRY AGAIN.

"And underneath, gentlemen, I think we shall find our egg!"



Special Freight

THE *Ashendine*, loaded down to her marks, lay still and quiet at her berth. There was nothing of the usual bustle of sailing-day about her. A solitary winch was working with a subdued rattle and steam hissed along her deck-pipes as if enjoining silence.

"I don't like the look of it," said the First, moodily helping himself to more potatoes, "waiting here with a full head of steam." He always is a pessimist when not at sea.

"Away, man," said the Second, a cheerful soul. "It's always like this when the Old Man's Missus comes aboard. You ought to thank your stars she canna interfere wi' us."

"Well, even if she has turned the ship upside-down, what are we waiting for?" demanded the First. "To-morrow's Friday the thirteenth.

Why don't we sail and have done with it?"

"That's what I want to know," grumbled Number Two. (The mates were temporary guests of the Engineers' mess during Captain Henderson's brief interlude of domesticity in the saloon.) "Just as I get the last of the cargo nicely stowed the Old Man tells me to clear out the 'tween decks abaft the cross-bunker hatch. Then when I ask him what's to go there he nearly bites my head off."

"I tell you what I think," said Number Three, who reads the war magazines. "We're going to be a 'Q' Ship."

"Not the *Ashendine*," said Number Two. "She's too slow."

"I'd have you know," said the First, his moustache bristling, "that when we get co-operation from the deck we

can average twelve and a half knots across the North Atlantic, east to west."

"Well, anyway," said Number Two, dismissing the side issue as too dangerous to be followed up in present company, "what gives you that idea, Jarvis?"

"Chips is down below right this minute," said Number Three, "building a stage over the deck-plates athwart the cargo ports. What do you think that means?"

"We don't know," said Number One, entering the mess-room with a sheaf of papers in his hand. "You tell us."

"Torpedo-tubes, that's what!" said Number Three, with deep conviction, just as Gunn the greaser passed by the open door on his way forward.

The fo'c's'l was soon agog with the

news that the three-point-seven on the poop was to be supplemented by a couple of twelve-inch torpedo-tubes. Gunn is nothing if not circumstantial. Deckhands and firemen foregathered at once on the neutral ground of the companion-way to discuss the situation.

"It's about time, too," said the bo'sun. He has never forgiven the Admiralty for refusing his services, and still avers that no Daggs has ever suffered from varicose veins. "But who's going to work 'em?"

"What about the extra 'and?" said Gunn. "'E's not Merchant Navy, you can tell that by 'is clo'es. Looks like an R.N. bloke, if you ask me."

The gentleman in question poked his head around the starboard doorway, attracted by the sound of conversation. "What's up?" he inquired.

"It's all right," said the bo'sun, cordially. "We've just tumbled to what you're aboard for; been at this game long?"

"Oh, aye," said the extra hand. "I've made a tidy few trips like this. It's my speciality, as you might say."

"Do they ever do much damage?" demanded the bloodthirsty Daggs.

"Now and again," admitted the other, diffidently. "But they don't often get the chance."

"Anyhow," said Gunn, offering a large and oily hand, "I think I am speaking on be'alf of all 'ands when I say that we are proud to 'ave you aboard."

"Thanks, gentlemen," replied the stranger, shaking the proffered hand. "That's what I call proper friendly treatment. You wouldn't believe what I've had to put up with on some ships I could name. They seemed to think I was a bit of a nuisance."

"That's patriotism for you," said the bo'sun, with a sorrowful shake of his head.

Meanwhile, the controversy still raged amidships. "Don't talk daft," said Number One. "Torpedo-tubes and 'Q' Ships. You're old enough to know better."

"Then tell me why the Old Man's been wearing his brassbound jacket," demanded Number Three.

"That's easy," said Number One. "The Missus always makes him put it on whenever she comes aboard. She thinks it makes the men look up to him."

"It just might be what he says, though," put in Number Two. "What's in those long crates marked 'Stow Away From Boilers'? Those could be torpedoes. They're heavy enough."

"They could be, all right," conceded Number One, consulting the

manifest. "But they're entered here as linoleum."

"Mr. Stokes!" said a crisp voice from somewhere close at hand.

"Yes, Sir?" said Number One, hurrying out on deck.

"Put a gangway down number two hatch to the 'tween decks," ordered Captain Henderson. "There's a very special piece of freight coming on board in an hour's time. Have all hands standing by. They may be needed."

"Aye, aye, Sir," said Number One.

"May I ask what it is?"

A gleam appeared in the eye of his commander. He too had heard the voice of rumour and saw no reason to contradict it.

"Wait and see," he said, with a solemn and portentous wink.

The entire ship's company mustered around the cross-bunker hatch long before the appointed time, peering down at Chips as he finished his handiwork. The stage, which only just cleared the deck-plates, was now surmounted by a framework of heavy balks.

"What did I tell you?" said Number Three, when Captain Henderson sent for the First. "I expect it's about the compressed air. That's what they use to fire torpedoes."

A large plain van drew up on the pier and there was an immediate transfer of interest. Suspense mounted as a uniformed driver opened the rear door

and let down a tailboard. When the extra hand disappeared inside, it became almost unbearable.

There was no immediate comment as the special freight finally appeared. The "Ashendines" were simply dumbfounded. Slowly it was brought aboard, looking, as the First was later heard to remark, like a cross between a hearth-rug and a bicycle.

"This is Roderich Dhu," announced the extra hand, with evident pride in his charge, pausing for a moment to display it to the wondering beholders before leading it below. "Won first prize three years running at the Highland Agricultural Exhibition at Fort William, and now he's being sold in the States for a mint of money. Looks fierce, doesn't he, with those long horns? But he's as gentle as a lamb."

Number Three was the first to regain his speech. "Suffering Moses," he said faintly, "it's a bull."

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Minority Report

"No doubt the bayonet is a good weapon to fall back on if there aren't enough guns to go round."—*Daily Paper*.

o o

"London comment on Hr. Ryti's broadcast is that Finland is allowing herself to become Finland's dupe."—*Evening Paper*.

Very natural, too.



"Of course, if you don't object to a perfumed brand with rose-coloured tips . . ."

At the Pictures

BLONDE IN BOMBER

IN *I Wanted Wings* (Director: MITCHELL LEISEN) you may savour the old-world sweetness of an imaginary or practice air-raid. The makers of the picture too evidently thought this would seem a trifle old-world: they took care to provide it with additional drama in the form of a blonde gold-digging murderess who stows away in one of the manœuvring bombers to escape the police, and indirectly causes it to crash-land and kill her. This young woman, who is photographed frequently under a top light as if to illustrate the famous remark about the lady who was not without a certain cadaverous charm, acts as what is known as the Menace in this story, which is nearly all (and it runs for two hours and a quarter) about the training of U.S. air cadets. It does in fact contrive to go into very full details of this training and still to be an entertainment of formidable efficiency. Of course the story concerns three friends—I never knew a story of this kind that didn't—and follows them from their enlistment to the time when one (only one) of them gets his "wings" as a lieutenant; but there is very much less of the usual rah-rah college-boy stuff than one might have feared. There is to be sure the customary undistinguished "marching song" which it seems that all who join a body of uniformed men on the other side of the Atlantic let themselves in for, but that can be borne. RAY MILLAND, WILLIAM HOLDEN and WAYNE MORRIS are the three, and Mr. MILLAND, as the biggest star, is of course the one who wins through to get the *nice* girl (CONSTANCE MOORE) at the end. The ill-fated blonde is played by VERONICA LAKE, who is obviously in every sense a girl to watch.

You remember the old-wise-mother scenes in *Love Affair*? You remember the country-bedrooms scenes in *The Awful Truth*? If you recall these, and a number of other moments

in other popular (and good) films it would take me too much fishing in a glutted memory to find and too long to describe, you may be said to know

all about *Come Live With Me* (Director: CLARENCE BROWN); you have practically seen it already, except that you haven't seen JAMES STEWART and

HEDY LAMARR in it before. That, I suppose, is really the important point. Miss LAMARR is very beautiful and Mr. STEWART is a very competent actor, and together they provide this earnestly - accumulated mess of secondhand situations with enough appeal to make it quite entertaining. The basis of the story is another of those hasty loveless marriages-of-convenience; the embroidery is in terms of character, mostly comic; the end of course you can guess. Among the other players the most memorable is ADELINE DE WALT REYNOLDS, who gives us an old wise *Grandma* very much less insufferable than old wise film grandmas usually are.

I may be too easy to please, but at least it is safe to say that some of the colour in *Western Union* (Director: FRITZ LANG) seems to me the best I ever saw, and I believe it to be among the best anybody else ever saw too. We are given plenty of opportunity here to feast our eyes on the magnificent landscape of the State of Utah; but the colour-camera is also used with skill and imagination for small pleasant effects—the little blue *Western Union* notice in a waste of tan and dull-green, for instance. Broadly, this is a *Western* (spectacular rising down from the skyline, Injun fighting, the humours of camp life, bad men) and FRITZ LANG is an unexpected name to find as director of a type of narrative so unsubtle, offering so little chance for broodingly sinister effects. Nevertheless it is a good one, and Mr. LANG is as much entitled as anyone else to show versatility. This story of how the telegraph-line was taken from Omaha to Salt Lake City in the early 'sixties is exciting, interesting, and well played by, among others, DEAN JAGGER, RANDOLPH SCOTT and ROBERT YOUNG. (Mr. JAGGER seems to be working up quite a connection with Salt Lake City: it seems only a month or two since he was there as the founder of the Mormon Church.) R. M.



[I Wanted Wings]

LITTLE THINGS OVERLOOKED ON A BOMBER

Sally VERONICA LAKE



[Come Live With Me]

FACING DOWN TO IT

Bill Smith JAMES STEWART
Johnny Jones HEDY LAMARR

Lewis

LEWIS is a young brown owl of hefty proportions who has been hanging about our camp for three weeks. He is called Lewis because of a fancied resemblance to our Brigadier.

"Poor thing," said Sapper Sympson when he first fluttered into our tent. "He looks hungry. Try him with a bit of your corned beef."

I was not anxious to part with any of the small portion of corned beef which was my reward for a long day's toil in the cook-house, but Sympson had provided a bottle of sauce and two rounds of bread to complete the feast, so I could hardly refuse hospitality to his new protégé.

"He likes it!" said Sympson gleefully. He did, and from that moment he adopted us. A bird of independent ideas, he did not spend his whole time in the tent, for which we were grateful, but he was more often with us than not. Sympson constructed a sort of perch, which he fastened to the tent-pole, and after a long struggle we managed to sit Lewis on it, but he soon fluttered down again to Sympson's bed. If he had always patronized Sympson's bed the rest of us in the tent would have been grateful, but Lewis liked a change. Coming in after dark, and unable to strike a match because of the black-out, it was unnerving for us to find Lewis in possession of our blankets, and more than once the noise he made attracted the unwelcome attention of the Orderly Corporal.

"He is not our owl," said Sympson loftily, when Lewis had been particularly noisy three nights running.

"Then whose owl is he?" asked Corporal Jeffert. Corporal Jeffert is fond of asking unanswerable questions. Then he added ominously, "If we have any more trouble with this owl of yours the whole tent will be on a charge."

We told Sympson that it was up to him to get rid of Lewis. Sapper Corvell, with a vague recollection of cats, suggested a brick and a pond. Sapper Williams said that he believed it was unlucky to kill an owl. Then he mumbled something about owls in *East Lynne*, but finally admitted that possibly it was bats he was thinking of.

"The best and kindest thing," said Sapper Croft, "will be to lure the bird into a kit-bag and then carry him away to the heart of a wood and release him."

It seemed a good idea, and we set about it without delay. Sapper Tyson was out, so we emptied his kit-bag,



"What the blazes do you mean, 'After you, Sir'?—can't you see I'm only a private, confound you!"

and the floor was strewn with odd socks, pants men's long, and all the bric-à-brac that makes the British soldier what he is.

Looked at in cold blood, it seems difficult to believe that a young owl could elude seven men in a small tent for the best part of an hour, but Lewis was tough. Not till the place was a shambles did Sympson get hold of him, and then our victory was short-lived. Lewis pecked viciously, Sympson yelled loudly, and then Lewis quietly

withdrew from the tent. He had the aggrieved air of a bird shaking inhospitable dust from his feet.

The only bright side to the picture is that he has now adopted the Company Office marquee as his permanent home. He sits on the table all day and stares Corporal Jeffert out of countenance, he eats his rations, and makes such a noise at night that the O.C. has threatened to take away Corporal Jeffert's stripes unless he can keep his pet quiet.



"I take it you'll render it in triplicate?"

An Appeal to the Chancellor

THE changed method of collection of income tax initiated some months ago by the Chancellor of the Exchequer has now been operating long enough to allow one to make a dispassionate survey of its effects and performance; and when I give my own criticism I want it to be understood that I refer only to the method and not to the revised scale. Although my private opinion is that the Chancellor may have erred perhaps just a shade on the side of savage extortion, I am not inclined to grumble about the amount of the tax. He wants his money and he must have it.

Speaking entirely without official authority, I should say he is probably collecting all this money at source month by month in order to get it earlier and more regularly than he did before. No doubt that is how he likes it, and he may be right; though I should be interested to know whether he has considered the relative psychological values of occasional large instalments and frequent petty dribbles. I suppose he has. But what about the effect on the ordinary man? What about the worker whose monthly

earnings fluctuate widely? What, in fact, about me?

I must explain that the new procedure began to take effect just when I was separated by the exigencies of war from my wife and family. My wife, who takes a somewhat calculating view of financial matters, at once decided on an extreme course of action: she announced that for the time we must become completely independent in all money affairs, including the payment of taxes. I was no longer to be responsible for the welfare of my family. I naturally and chivalrously demurred, but she pointed out that for some time I had taken rather more from our combined resources than I had contributed; she had of course kept a careful record of the exact figures. She hoped I should be able to fend for myself, but felt that in fairness to the children I must fend no more for them. I reluctantly agreed, and without rancour we went our several fiscal ways. What she is living on now I cannot imagine. Capital, I suppose; and I should like to know where she finds it.

When we explained the position to

the Chancellor he decided to mulct me monthly, from last November, of 13s. 11d. For a month or two I found this no great hardship. In November I earned nearly £5, and although all I actually received was nearly £4 6s. 1d., I naturally lived very well and felt no particular anxiety for the future. In December my income was rather less—about £3 10s., as far as I remember, but I managed to satisfy my simple needs and was able to get home at Christmas for a few days. There I replenished my purse, for in a quiet hour I gave my small niece and even smaller daughter a poker lesson and then skinned them completely of all their Christmas cash; I netted no less than £1 14s. 8d. by this cunning device. My baby daughter, toddling in her play-pen among three brand-new half-crowns, was still easier prey; the adroit substitution of a couple of coloured beads was enough to pacify her for the loss of each of these valuable coins. I felt so encouraged by these successes that for a day or two I had dreams of emigrating and trying my hand as a trader among some simple native tribe with no idea of the value of money; but of course I remembered the needs of my country in time to abandon this attractive prospect.

January, thus happily inaugurated, was a month of comfort if not of affluence, for even in the wilderness of rising prices a grand-total income of nearly £4 carried me safely through to the next pay-day. I was nevertheless very thankful when that great day arrived. With an inscrutable face the cashier handed me 3d. and asked me to buy a Red Cross flag.

"Certainly," I said, returning one-third of the total sum. "But can I have the rest of my money?"

"There isn't any more."

"But where the—I mean, I don't understand. Surely I've earned more than 3d.?"

"Of course: you've earned 14s. 2d. but 13s. 11d. has gone to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I'm afraid it doesn't leave very much."

"No, not very much."

"Perhaps in the circumstances you'd like to leave the Red Cross flag?"

"Oh, no. It would cost me more to get another outside. Well, I suppose I must go and dree my weird as best I can. But it'll be a pretty weird weird on 2d."

This was a crisis in my affairs. I had to live somehow—my duty to my country demanded it—but at first it was a little difficult to see how. I thought of writing to my wife, but pride and the high price of stamps prevented me. A more attractive idea



"The baker? Well, ask him if he has any sausages."

was to live on berries. I tried this for three days, but found none; I discovered later that it was the off-season for berries and in any case I was competing against feathered professionals.

The future seemed black indeed. And then I had a really brilliant idea: I determined to sell one of my cars.

To be precise, after a look at my own coupé I decided that my wife's saloon would be a more appropriate sacrifice. There was enough petrol in my tank to take me home, and I knew I should have no difficulty there in selling a good secondhand car.

Luckily my wife was out and her car was in. In less than an hour the petrol from her tank had been transferred to mine and I was driving back with nearly a hundred pounds in my pocket, inventing poignant phrases for the letter I later wrote to her.

This timely wealth kept me in reasonable comfort for the rest of February and all of March, though I had not the strength of will to resist entirely my craving for War Bonds, and in consequence dissipated my resources a little earlier than I had hoped. April brought me face to face once more with the hard facts of existence: a week before I was due to receive my salary in May my pockets were empty. I quickly determined to sell the coupé. It went for a mere £65, but this sum ended my financial troubles for a period of four weeks.

Yesterday once again I approached the cashier for my pay.

"Three shillings and sevenpence, please," he said.

I suppose I ought to have been prepared for this, but I am an optimist by nature and it had never occurred to me that the Chancellor could ever exact from me more than my total earnings for the month. But so it was. The tax had already been paid and I was expected to make good the difference.

I have never allowed myself to run

into debt, and I refuse to do so now; but it is difficult to find an alternative. I cannot find my other car, an old knockabout tourer I used to keep just for knockabout touring; it has somehow been mislaid, though I distinctly remember using it last November. I bitterly regret its loss. I will not appeal to my wife and I cannot get at my children. One thing is certain: I absolutely refuse to sell my piano. I would rather face starvation. I shall probably have to. All I can think of is to lay my case before the public.

P.S.—To-night I had a chance to buy a packet of a hundred cigarettes. The temptation was irresistible; I sold my piano and snapped them up at once.

(N.B.—The figures quoted in this article are to some extent fictitious.)

Unreal Estate

SUCH wonders have never been
Under the sun,
In any clime,
As those that we might have seen
Or could have done
If we'd had the time.

"The stockingless ones are encouraged to wash their feet in cool water to which a little salt has been added to harden the skin, and the sun-bathers have a bottle of calamine and some cotton-wool ready to dab on to remove the skin."—*Sunday Paper*.

We thought the sun did that.



"I can't imagine, Sergeant—unless it's a wishing-well."



"I don't know why they have to keep on enclosing these damned Economy Labels."

July 1941

THE year's half over
for those who live,
but the year has gathered
its fruits to give.

July is storing
England's power
and England's strength
for harvest's hour.

July is like a sailor,
feeling the salt breeze,
and setting forth at last
on the high seas.

July is like a soldier,
standing on the hill,

ready to march and fight,
after training and drill.

July is like an airman
looking into the night—
calm and confident—
facing a long flight.

July is for those
who hold courage dear:
July is England's month,
for harvest is near.

And all England knows
this certain thing:
July is like a hunting lion,
crouched to spring!



FROM NIGHT TO DAY

"THEY ALSO SERVE"

THEY are brave, these people who, behind the scenes, whether at home or in the factories, go quietly about their essential tasks. Air-raids, nights in shelters, lost sleep, nerve strain, all is accepted cheerfully, for they are determined to carry on. Even when they are bombed and lose their homes and cherished possessions, their grateful appreciation of the help given them through the PUNCH HOSPITAL COMFORTS FUND acclaims the spirit which cannot be broken.

The privilege of service to them is extended to you. Will you help us supply their most urgent needs? If you have helped us with contributions before will you please help us again? If this is your first introduction to the Fund will you please become a subscriber? Donations will be gratefully acknowledged by Mr. Punch at PUNCH HOSPITAL COMFORTS FUND, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.



"Don't 'URRY—yer group ain't called up yet!"

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Tuesday, July 1st.—House of Lords: A Discussion on Agriculture; All-Sorts Day. Finance Bill, Third Reading.

Wednesday, July 2nd.—House of Lords: Debate on the Reorganization of the Diplomatic Service.

House of Commons: War Damage Bill, Committee.

Thursday, July 3rd.—House of Commons: Debate on Propaganda.

Tuesday, July 1st.—Mr. EDGAR GRANVILLE, whose wide-open-spaces tan has given him the reputation of being the original inspiration of the once-famous slogan, "Handsome men are slightly sunburnt," gave the House of Commons a slogan of his own today. Urging incessant bombing of Germany as a means of helping the Russians, he added that every bomb dropped *now* was worth ten in time to come: "A bomb in time saves nine!"

When it came to the turn of Mr. EMMANUEL SHINWELL, the vigorous leader of the unofficial Official Opposition, to suggest something with boiling oil in it for the Nazis, he proposed "forceful and even ruthless" bombing.



IN THE LAND OF EGYPT

MINISTER OF STATE, MR. OLIVER LYTTELTON

Mr. CLEMENT ATTLEE, Lord Privy Seal, just then leading the House, put on his most knowing look and promised that the grass should not be permitted to grow beneath the Government's feet.

Sir HENRY MORRIS-JONES unearthed the reputed fact that the Welsh Church Commission does "one hour's

work a month." Mr. ATTLEE reacted cautiously to a mild suggestion that this did not seem quite right, and succeeded in conveying the impression that a Welshman's work is *never done*. Sir HENRY's expression said: "Precisely!" Mr. ATTLEE's: "I don't mean what *you* mean!"

Captain HAROLD BALFOUR, who speaks for the Air Ministry in the seemingly permanent absence from the House of his chief, the Minister, entered this in Mr. Punch's Anthology of Eternal Truths: "The terms 'good' and 'bad' are relative."

That other "Little Stranger" to the House, young Mr. GEOFFREY LLOYD, Secretary for Petroleum, answering his single question, announced that there is to be a one-sixth cut in the basic petrol ration and pretty severe restrictions on extra rations of that precious spirit, which, literally, may be lives o' men. Everyone who draws the little extra something that the others haven't got will have to pay for the privilege by being compelled to keep a log of all journeys made. He did not make it clear whether a master mariner's or pilot's certificate would have to be carried with the more normal driving licence in future.

But he did make it unmistakably plain that those who waste petrol—whether by using it for unnecessary purposes, by having too big cars, or by avoidable travelling—are doing the country a disservice.

It seemed to your scribe that officials and high officers (not to mention some of the Ministers) looked a trifle uneasily towards their impressive line of cars that stood in the courtyard.

Wearing his sternest expression—which is not so very—Mr. LLOYD went on to say that he would relentlessly pursue the "wangers." The careless cheered. The careless looked even more uneasy.

By the way, the Home Guard—often referred to affectionately as the "Old Guard"—is not all *that* old, it seems. Captain DAVID MARGESSON, who himself contrives to look younger and more debonair every day, was (in the words of the sensational Press) "able to reveal" that a story of the appointment of a man of more than 80 to be a Home Guard officer was not true.

Mr. MATHERS, whose query had happened to receive considerable advance publicity, frankly apologized for allowing himself to be misled. It was Mr. MATHERS' unlucky day. A moment later, his head hanging in shame, he had to confess that a reference in a further question to the

Land Drainage (Scotland) Act, "1940" should—as all the world knows (or does it?)—be "1941." The House took this second blotting of the honourable Member's copy-book of veracity with astonishing calm.

Then the House got down to details



THE PANACEA

"If we want to prevent illness . . . what is the solution? Milk is the answer."

Lord Dawson of Penn

of the Finance Bill. Mr. BENSON became quite impassioned about the difference (if any) between "mainly" and "solely." Mr. SPENS, who, as a K.C., speaks with authority, seemed to argue that there was no difference, if the object of a scheme was "mainly"—or even "solely" . . . that is, "solely" or even "mainly" . . . well, anyway, dash it, it simply was not done to dodge taxes in war-time, so what were the odds?

Members who had expected a few tips on how legally to dodge taxes, looked disappointed. Mr. BENSON gave up.

Then the Bill was given a Third Reading, and Sir KINGSLEY WOOD, raiser of record sums from long-suffering taxpayers, went on his way rejoicing. Other Members, who have to *pay* the taxes, just went on their way with (as Coroners say) insufficient evidence to show the state of their minds at the time.

Their Lordships discussed the source of all wealth—Agriculture. It was very learned and knowledgeable, beautifully expressed, and informative. And inconclusive. But everybody was



"I dunno—I think it must be some new cure for chilblains . . ."

obviously glad to have had the little chat, which Lord TEVIOT started.

Wednesday, July 2nd.—Let it be placed on record that Sir ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, Air Minister, this day made a brief personal appearance in the House and answered five whole questions. New Members, told who he was, looked at him with interest.

Shrewd Mr. JACK LAWSON got mingled cheers and dissent for his statement that the average Britisher did not care a "cuss" about the activities of Herr HESS.

Mr. HORE-BELISHA asked for a statement from the PREMIER about changes in the High Command—General Sir ARCHIBALD WAVELL from Cairo to India and General Sir CLAUDE AUCHINLECK changing places with him—and on the sending of Mr. OLIVER LYTTLETON to the Middle East as a sort of major domo for the War Cabinet. Mr. CHURCHILL, however, snappily declined to make a statement, and will be formally questioned on the subject later.

And so to War Damage compensation and other highly necessary, if unexciting, problems.

In response to pressure, Mr. HERBERT MORRISON, Home Secretary, promised to consider the limitation of racing to Saturdays. He said the reason was "psychological"—but whether in relation to the horses or the backers, he did not explain.

Thursday, July 3rd.—To-day was dedicated to the thorny subject of propaganda, with a small "p." The main complaint was that it was spelt by the Cabinet not only with a small "p" but in the smallest possible type. Members plainly wanted big type and even bigger ideas. Even speeches from the sacred Treasury Bench left them unsatisfied.

Sir JOHN ANDERSON, Lord President, explained the Cabinet's plans in a speech which, according to another M.P., contained more clichés and self-evident truths to the cubic inch than any speech delivered for some time.

In the end, it was decided to leave the Ministry of Information in—as another wit put it—the status quo antedeluvian.

Mr. DUFF COOPER, Minister of Information, patently did not enjoy the debate.

At the Play

"BLITHE SPIRIT" (PICCADILLY)

DR. JOHNSON said of ghosts that all argument was against them, but all belief was for them; the story-tellers and dramatists have naturally voted with the credulous "ayes." Shades of departed heroes were among the world's first players, and the power of spectres to amuse has been as great as their ability to enthrall. So their dominion abides, and now even Mr. NOEL COWARD has determined to join, if only with fiddle-sticks, in the theatre's eternal Spook Sonata.

Blithe Spirit is called "an improbable farce." This seems a waste of words, for when has farce even been on nodding terms with probability? It might be more usefully sub-titled "a jaunt on the astral plane." The moral is simple, namely, that it is as dangerous to mock the Medium as it is to tease the cat. Mr. *Condoman*, a novelist in search of copy, invokes *Madame Arcati* to provide an ectoplasmic evening, and this Madame so

triumphantly achieves that *Mr. Condoman* finds himself with the spectre of his dead wife on his hands as well as with the living reality of his second.

There was a time when ghosts decently knocked off at cock-crow, but the late *Elvira Condoman* is not thus easily wafted away by the dismissive influence of dawn. To be frank, she is not at all a nice ghost. *Mr. COWARD's* Shelleyan title is altogether too flattering, for the spirit turns out to be far from blithe and was once most certainly a "bird"—at least in the vulgar sense of our music-hall slang. She has returned to be sulkily jealous and to plague her successor. Needless to say, *Mr. COWARD* makes very good, if sometimes rather prolonged, fun with the situation in which the ghost of the first wife is always visible and audible to the husband and never to the second wife. It should further be explained, lest the subject thus summarized seem morbid, that the character of *Madame Arcati* has been so uproariously invented by *Mr. COWARD* and is so brilliantly played by Miss MARGARET RUTHERFORD that the right nonsensical atmosphere is created at the start.

Before long the first *Mrs. Condoman* becomes as mischievous as a poltergeist and manages to dispose of her living rival, which gives the much-vexed latter a chance to get her own back on the astral plane, where, it seems, assault and battery are agreeably possible. However, poor *Mr. Condoman* is now a man with a brace of uxorial boogies, and, confronted by two such loads of mischief, reflects how happy could he be with neither. His problem, and that of *Madame Arcati*, is how to make the dear departed actually once more depart. They too begin to grow weary of the sun, but it seems far harder to lay a ghost than to raise one. We need not betray the recipe. It is suitably farcical, but the end takes too long to arrive and *Mr. COWARD's* touch deserts him when he makes *Mr. Condoman* gloat over his new-found freedom from women. The acid here corrodes the honest metal of the previous drollery.

The joke may not quite last the three-Act distance (what a one-Acter *BARRIE* might have made of this when free of whimsy and wearing his Twelve-Pound Look!), but we can trust *Mr. COWARD* to make both his mortals and immortals, as they say on pantomime programmes, cut some capital capers. The defunct certainly do not come in questionable shape when Miss *FAY COMPTON* and Miss *KAY HAMMOND* are there to embody them, both being

admirable in repartee and noteworthy examples of the decorative possibilities of an ectoplasmic grey. *Mr. CECIL PARKER* is the best possible actor for *Mr. Condoman*, because he so dexterously keeps the fun airy when it might so easily be earth-bound.

Miss RUTHERFORD, as *Madame Arcati*, a psychic lady with a shrewd eye for her victuals—one who bicycles lustily through the wind on the heath in order to attend a séance and essay a trance, presents a gorgeous cartoon of Mind, Matter, and Mumbo-Jumbo. It is she who establishes the piece as

riotous nonsense; did it ever slip closer to reality, it might turn to a fatally sour kind of fun. *Mr. COWARD's* less than transient but very embarrassed phantoms would then grievously embarrass us. But a tactful performance, directed by the author, keeps the party far more gay than grim.

I. B.

"Sometimes people get a wanderlouse and it makes them restless."

Schoolgirl's Essay on "Travel."

Definitely.



"Wot's she say this time—'Yes' or 'No'?"

"Neither—it's all just arguing about 'oo would be best man.'"

Times Aren't What They Were.

ONCE upon a time, and possibly oftener, there was a person who thought he had a voice which would sound well singing over the radio. The B.B.C.—and this really gives the whole story a unique *cachet*—thought the same, although not with an equal degree of certainty, but at any rate to the extent of letting him try.

"Now, Cyril," they said encouragingly.

Cyril, in a whimsical and old-Englysshe way, sang something which began: "*Sing a Song of Sixpence, A pocketful of rye,*" and was immediately stopped.

For one thing, it was pointed out to him, rye either had or hadn't been rationed the day before, and in any case the price was going to be controlled and then there wouldn't be any rye, or if there were, that would mean it had been decontrolled and put on to the margarine coupons of the new issue but mustn't be applied for until after the last day of the first week of the Fruit Preservation Scheme. And, in case that wasn't enough to deter him, the pocket wasn't the proper place in which to keep rye and hadn't he ever listened-in to the Back-Kitchen Front Talks?

Cyril saw that he'd been wrong about the rye and undertook to use it in future as a substitute for pomegranate juice—its most obvious function—and not to keep it in his pocket, except in vitamin form. He then went on with the song.

"*Four-and-twenty blackbirds, Baked in a pie.*"

This, unfortunately, turned out to be not too good either.

Blackbirds, although not rationed, would almost certainly become so if it took four-and-twenty of them to make a pie. And what about cooking-fat for the pastry?

Cyril felt that he'd been absolutely playing Hitler's game for him, and didn't even have the presence of mind to suggest that it might be potato-pastry.

Instead, he rushed on to another part of this rather unfortunately-chosen song—leaving out a couple of lines about what the blackbirds did after they'd been baked because something told him that the housewives of Great Britain and the Dominions would view it as a reflection on their baking.

"*The King was in the counting-house, Counting out his money,*" he carolled.

He was immediately taken off the air again.

"Really, Cyril," said the B.B.C.—and that, for them, was a pretty stern condemnation.

It was then explained to Cyril that he couldn't go giving information to the enemy like that. The whole country was full of kings who, not caring for the New Disorder in Europe, had gone into temporary retirement—but were Ribbentrop and Goering and the rest of them to be deliberately told their exact whereabouts?

As for the reference to sterling, it couldn't go out just like that. It would attract the unfavourable attention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer without a doubt, unless it could be made absolutely clear that it was being counted out with a view to putting it into War Loan that very day.

Cyril said—though without much foundation—that he felt sure this was so, and hastened on to the next stanza as best he could—though "best" is perhaps hardly the word.

"*The Queen was in the parlour, Eating bread and honey.*"

Even as he sang, or quavered, he could kind of feel the shadow of Lord Woolton in the atmosphere.

Sure enough it turned out that the allusion was anything but a happy one.

What kind of bread was the Queen eating? Was it wholemeal? Had she experienced any difficulty in obtaining it from the retailer with whom she was registered?

Cyril, fearful of being asked next what kind of bees had supplied the Queen with honey, came down a bit in the social scale and warbled:

"*The maid was in the garden, Hanging out the clothes,*" and was at once stopped again.

Wouldn't it be better propaganda to say "Hanging out the coupons"? And in any case, wouldn't the maid do better in a munitions factory, or a bus, driving a car, or radio-locating?

The B.B.C. also asked, kindly but gravely, whether this girl had registered.

Cyril, at this, suddenly remembered words spoken more than once by his aunts and their friends, and the friends of their friends, and declared that the maid was a strong, experienced, intelligent woman of just over forty.

And everyone at once said—thus confirming the utterances of Cyril's

aunts and their circle—"Oh, in that case, it doesn't matter, because there just *aren't* any war jobs for them."

He then finished the song:

"*Down came a blackbird, And pecked off her nose*"—fully expecting to be told that something was wrong with that too.

His expectations were more than justified.

This reference to dive-bombing, said the B.B.C. people, had something definitely Fifth Column about it.

And on the whole, they thought Cyril had better give place to a record, made by Cal O'Callaghan, leader of the Swing Rhythm Blues Octet, and called "London, London, I'll say it's London." E. M. D.

Office Gardens

I DON'T know where they got the soil from but they did. Of course it would be Jim, my boy-friend in the drawing-office, who began it all. He noticed how they got all the sun on that sloping bit of roof of theirs, so out he went as soon as they could get enough window open, and the first thing I knew about it they'd got onions and tomatoes and lettuces and I don't know what else in boxes up there.

Once you start things moving, they never seem to stand still. Next thing, when all that mess was cleared away after the bomb behind the Works, they found it was soil underneath the dump and they never knew. And the bomb swept Mr. Head's chimney for him, so Jim took the soot for his tomatoes and the broken glass for his lettuce frame, so it's an ill blast that blows nobody any good as you might say.

So now they've brought some of the vegetables down to make a ground-floor garden, and that leaves room for a few flowers on the roof, all red geraniums and white daisies and blue delphiniums. Anyway, even if it only grows dandelions and nettles you can eat them in war-time, and there's always parsley and mint (though some people Doris knew with a window-box they'd got to Grow More Food in had to throw all the mint sauce out and the lamb one Sunday because it turned out to be catmint). I will say there's something tasty about even mustard

and cress when it's your own home-grown whiskers you're eating, though those first sweet little baby radishes we'd grown ourselves made me feel like a cannibal. I couldn't bear to get fond of a pig. Jim's all full of ideas after reading about a Glasgow bank that kept hens on the roof, and Doris was just as bad, but I said no, it would never do here nor beehives either. Then she wanted to know couldn't we grow beetroot and make our own sugar. I must say myself I wouldn't mind growing some fruit for a change instead of all these everlasting green vegetables. Carrots never were my cup of tea anyway, and Jim says we'll be eating them for donkey's years yet.

One of the girls opposite has been evacuated to her boss's house and though it's only at Ealing there's rhubarb in the garden and they made jam of it all one Friday afternoon with ginger in it. I knew an office myself once where they used to grow tomatoes on top of the Strand, but they had rats there.

One office I was in they had a real garden and gardeners on the roof with a putting green, and we'd take our lunch up there sometimes, only you just couldn't settle down to a good steady afternoon's work on invoices after watching those boats come in and out and go to Russia, and Tower Bridge coming in two and joining up again.

Talking of joining up, Doris still can't decide whether to be a nurse or a W.A.A.F. to match her cousin in the R.A.F. It's all very well for her but we're working late every other night as it is. Uniform or no uniform, everybody knows offices have got to carry on somehow, or where would your war be without them?

She's been ever so good about the watering though and would spend three of her coupons already on a proper gardening-apron with pockets. It's just like when she wanted a siren-suit last year for the raids. I often think it's funny the way we spent all our time down in the basement last summer, and this year we're all up on the roof instead, if it's only fire-watching.

We'd been going to have a garden-warming for ages, only it kept so cold, but the other morning our refugee rang up to say he'd got a couple of days off and how were we all and the Doris and the Jim, so we fixed it all up then and there and asked him to come along early and make the coffee instead of the Works canteen. And we let him shake hands all round straightaway, seeing we hadn't seen him for months,

and then again when the coffee was ready. Lovely coffee it was too—tasted quite like the smell, you wouldn't believe—only he'd gone and made it in the teapot. But wouldn't you think not to make coffee in a teapot was one of the things everybody was born knowing, even a foreigner? And to think when that boy first came over, the only two words of English he knew were blitz and black-out!

It was a lovely fine night for once for the picnic and the sky was all sky-blue and the balloons silver and we took lots of snaps. In fact I had to go and get one of Mr. Head's umbrellas to put up because I haven't time to tan

properly and I don't want to peel. War or no war a girl's got to look after her complexion for when it's all over.

It only wanted a band and deck-chairs to make you think you were at the seaside, and then we all settled down to work, Jim watering and weeding, and Doris doing first aid for her exam next week in the corner by the sandbags, and our refugee winding wool for my Balaclava helmet while I did the dog-kennel bit that makes a nice change from stockings for mine-sweepers; and I thought, looking round at us all so nice and busy up there, you could never tell there was a war on.



"A coupon for your thoughts, dear."



"Or have you?"

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Fading Starlight

IN *Retrospective Adventures* Mr. FORREST REID (FABER, 12/6) collects a variety of examples of the different sorts of work he has produced during a life of authorship extending back more years than some of his admirers will care to admit. Certainly there cannot be many interested in literature at the time when ANDREW LANG was living who can claim to have forgotten him if they had once encountered his written criticisms, though there are very many who may never have heard of him. Mr. FORREST REID's discerning and kindly remarks on him and on many others whose names are hovering on the edge of oblivion will be welcomed by both classes. The hovering names include works widely discussed in their time but difficult to reanimate to-day. There are BARING GOULD's half-forgotten tale *Mehalah*, for instance, and MARGARET L. WOOD's *A Village Tragedy*. There are again "little masters" like RICHARD GARNETT, all evidence of how quickly the weathercock swings full compass. It is pleasant in such a book to come upon an explanation of the attraction we felt for the tales of GEORGE MANVILLE FENN at an age when close literary analysis was not one of our pursuits; and of the "tiresomeness" of such efforts as *Misunderstood*, and the positive loathing inspired by *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. But Mr. REID's tastes were not necessarily identifiable at all points with those of the average schoolboy. These cover widespread groups, to whom HENTY was assuredly not "that dreariest of impostors," and in the 'eighties the attitude which despised *King Solomon's Mines* and *Treasure Island* was very far from universal.

The Last of Čapek

Of all the shams shown up by the relentless lights of to-day, the claim of the artist to be immune from common morals is perhaps the most aptly illuminated. And because it is only fitting that artists should purge their own profession, one welcomes as a great gesture in the good cause KAREL ČAPEK's posthumous and unfinished novel, *The Cheat* (ALLEN AND UNWIN, 7/6). Here you have, observed by the men and women he exploited, a musician who fostered an almost non-existent vocation in the interest of his grubby little vices. On their last night together, the author described to his wife the death and burial of this *Beda Foltyn*. But here we end with the derisive production of *Foltyn's* opera *Judith* by musicians whose work he had plagiarized before a public whose credulity he had abused. It is fitting, one feels, that the satirist of the robot, a pest that has largely gained ground because the world's artists have proved unserviceable, should end on this note; and fitting too that last tributes from ČAPEK to us and from us to ČAPEK should belaud the dead brows of the lovable writer of *Letters from England*.

Rich and Strange

The first published volume of the unique and fiercely entertaining short stories of Mr. JOHN COLLIER is called *Presenting Moonshine* (MACMILLAN, 8/6). The title comes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn, Presenteth moonshine"; and it sums up the fact that there is about nearly all the twenty-four stories something fantastic, supernatural or wildly absurd. What makes Mr. COLLIER a uniquely satisfactory writer is that his dealings with fantasy (which



"You remember how, when all that fuss was on some time in January, we appointed a roof-spotter? Well, no one's thought of sending anyone up to relieve him."

tempts so many authors into something like second childhood) are conducted in a thoroughly adult fashion. He may be telling what amounts to a fairy story, but the result will be "tough," satirical, often ribald, profoundly intelligent and written in prose of the very first class: prose in which style, or "manner," is used as it should be, for a deliberate required effect, and not simply as an involuntary mould or a laboured trade-mark for every sentence. The exuberant imaginative power of some of these tales is captivating; all are intensely readable; many are funny. In comparison with the average British collection of competent, well-mannered, ordinary short stories this book glows and crackles with energy and life.

Chinese Epicurean

There is a great deal of delightful worldly wisdom among the forty-nine essays and sketches which Dr. LIN YUTANG reprints in *With Love and Irony* (HEINEMANN, 10/6). But when one has picked it out, as a knowledgeable hen picks out the sound pieces of maize in a rationed handful of corn, there remains, naturally enough, a rather chaffy residue. Still, hardly one of these vivacious articles but provides such challenging and well-meditated aphorisms as "Anything inhuman cannot last," or "Progress in Europe is the result not of the white man's thinking, but of his lack of thinking"; and Dr. LIN's enjoyable distaste for progress extends even to its colour-scheme—the colour, he says, of platinum blondes and chromium taps. He inevitably finds old Peking an ideal city and Shanghai "terrible in her strange mixture of Eastern and Western vulgarity." But he exhibits no supernatural horizons, and living this life is for him an end in itself if he is allowed to do so on his own modest terms—the terms rather of DIOGENES than ALEXANDER. How he, or anyone else, can retain the heaven on earth of a peaceful and uncontested tub, he does not vouchsafe to explain.

"The World Was Our Village."

One of the most remarkable things about Miss VIRGINIA COWLES' very remarkable book, *Looking for Trouble* (HAMISH HAMILTON, 12/6), is the way she underlines British courage while seeming quite unaware of her own. Her story begins in 1937 when "with no qualifications as a war correspondent except curiosity," she visited Republican Spain as representative of HEARST's newspapers and was very soon in the Front Line. Later she went to Nationalist Spain without a visa and was nearly detained. She was in Czechoslovakia when that country was mobilizing; went



Husband (to wife in the Q.M.A.A.C.s). "LOOK HERE, MARJORY, I WISH TO GOODNESS YOU WOULDN'T HANG YOUR BEASTLY TUNIC ON MY PEG!"

Arthur Ferrier, July 10, 1918

to Russia on behalf of *The Sunday Times*; heard HITLER's last "peace-time" speech in Berlin; was in Finland during the Russian invasion and in Paris about an hour before its occupation. Even after she had returned to England in a cargo-boat she went on looking for trouble, and managed to sign on as "extra pilot" of a flying-boat belonging to an Australian squadron for a day's patrol. Her book is as fine as the spirit she shows, and every page makes history.



"Here the curtain is lowered for three minutes to denote the passing of time, and rises again showing same scene—three minutes later."

Home Guard Goings-On

Battle of the Flowers

ON Tuesday evenings, Sunday mornings, routine duty nights and other occasions selected at short notice, we abandon civilian life. Our gardens may need watering, our chickens feeding; we may have arrears of correspondence to clear off, or urgent cheques to write; but when duty beckons we turn our backs on these delights and cycle off sternly to attend to the war; it has first call upon our leisure.

It called upon it at even shorter notice than usual last Saturday afternoon, of all times. We arrived home to

find a peremptory summons awaiting us, and at the hour when we should ordinarily have been pottering usefully about the house (or, it is just possible, sleeping uselessly on the lawn) we found ourselves drawn up outside Headquarters in the blistering sun, wondering whether our Platoon Commander would end his address before our boots had become fixtures in the molten macadam.

On the other side of the road stood an Army lorry, and while our ears learned that it had been made possible (at short notice) to stage a joint

exercise with a platoon of Regulars that afternoon, our eyes were trying to read the lorry-driver's character from his face. As he sat at the wheel, eating what those of us with long memories recognized as a banana, we recalled previous jaunts in Army lorries; we hoped he would bear in mind that we were only cunningly-disguised civilians unskilled in the tricks of self-preservation known to his regular passengers. But we learned little from his face; those parts of it not at grips with the banana displayed a wooden impassiveness to be seen in all Army faces, from field-m Marshals downwards.

Of his intentions, however, we were soon to learn. Crammed in behind him under the semi-circle of flapping canvas, and mainly concerned to avoid being flung into the next world, backwards, upwards or sideways, at the vehicle's every giddy paroxysm, we could still spare a part of our minds to decide that the man was intent on suicide. He was only waiting for a suitable spot before wrenching us all to our death; it might present itself, we felt, as we yawed round the very next bend, and the whole load of us would go tearing through as many farm-buildings as we could be expected to penetrate at a modest fifty-five miles an hour. We clung to each other, our eyes closed, and were hurled in entwined bundles up and down and from side to side, our rifles and equipment bounding unheeded about our knees.

That we were in fact brought to our journey's end with nothing worse than sitting casualties was due, we assumed, to his decision to savour the ecstasy of anticipation a little longer—until the return journey, in fact. As we fell thankfully out into the sunshine most of us were already making up provisional parties for the long walk back.

The scene presented to us was an inspiring one. In the quiet forest lane which we had so miraculously reached there was an assembly which would have made the invading legions think twice about cracking this island nut. Our Platoon was not the only one to attend. The celebrated armlets were writ large on all sides, sewn on at all angles; lorries like our own were parked in profusion under the trees; Army officers with as many as three pips on their shoulders were to be seen, consulting maps, pointing in all directions with their canes, and having every appearance of intending to take us seriously at last.

One of them approached us presently and broke to us the astounding news that troop-carriers had made crash-landings over the hill (he waved

vaguely at the masses of fern, gorse and multi-coloured rhododendrons on the rising ground behind him) and we, with help from other of our platoons, were now instructed to exterminate the enemy. He was very grave and very crisp, and we were glad to have had a forewarning that the whole affair was only another exercise. Our task seemed simple enough. We decided in our own minds to get it over as soon as possible and go home to tea.

We had noticed that our Platoon Sergeant had been trying in vain not to look ill at ease while gripping a shot-gun or fowling-piece of old-world design. We had feared that perhaps our beloved rifles were to be taken away from us and weapons of this sort substituted, but it now turned out that, for the first time, our work was to be lent realism by a few sound-effects. Other sergeants had also been issued with such weapons, and even with blank ammunition to match. Whenever it appeared to them that their men had disposed of one of the enemy they were to blaze away triumphantly with their guns, and the umpires—officers whose white brassards had been puzzling us—would register a good mark against us. The enemy (kindly impersonated by a detachment of Regulars, already gone to ground in anticipation of attack) were similarly equipped and instructed.

As we stole off in our Sergeant's wake along the uneven and well-screened track, expressions of approval were heard on all sides for this very satisfactory arrangement. If there is one thing that has tended to make past exercises null and void it has been the absence of significant explosions. The click of a trigger may be satisfying enough for the marksman who knows that his target was plain and his aim steady, but it is not a simple matter to explain to the target subsequently that it was mortally wounded five minutes before it threw its imaginary grenade into the small of the marksman's back. As recently as last Sunday, when Sergeants Gabb and Smirk threatened to sow the seeds of internal disunity over the question of whether the former had been killed outright before wounding the latter in the leg (carelessly exposed round a tree), our Platoon Commander had to use all his tact to restore good feeling. He had to remind the warring factions that MM. Reynaud and Daladier, in circumstances of similar urgency, had reaped the bitter harvest of divided opinions in pre-Vichy days.

As is usual in operations of this kind, we of the rank-and-file knew little of what was going on; questions of

strategy were in more capable hands; messengers and scouts arrived and were dispatched at intervals, but we never knew how the battle was going, never spied so much as a single tin-hat—the distinguishing mark of the enemy; sometimes we heard shots in the distance, but our orders were to keep low, so that we dared not look for ourselves and could only feed on

scraps of rumour whispered back to us; apart from wondering whether this was anything like the Real Thing (was it because we knew those shots were merely sound and fury, signifying nothing in terms of lead, that they failed to detract from the utter peace of the brilliant countryside?) we had little to occupy our minds.

Not so our bodies. We doubled up



"SEVERSONICE, Moddom!"

steep hills, established machine-gun positions, forsook them for the cover of rhododendron clumps, fell on our faces for a squirm across open country, rose to an agonizing crouch and sped like hares for more rhododendrons, our equipment chastising us on the parts of our bodies already most tender, careered madly downwards with no cover but scattered firs amongst which we ricocheted uncontrollably, barking our knees and knuckles . . . and onward, ever onward—more creeping, more climbing, more descending, getting ever more hot and breathless, shaking the perspiration out of our eyes like rain. . . .

But the enemy were too smart for us. We never saw them. Bruised and panting, aching and parched, we began to feel that war was a trying business, quite apart from shot and shell. And time was getting on. Somewhere a thousand miles away our wives were fondly brewing pots of tea for us. We thrust the thought aside. Why should we torture ourselves?

Then, as if at a sign, everyone seemed to relax and begin to walk about, carelessly, on the skyline. The whisper came back that the engagement had been fought to a finish, and sure enough, on the road below, we could see our lorry waiting to take us back again. We had no idea who had won, or whether we were dead or alive. All we knew was that the lorry which had seemed earlier in the afternoon to be nothing more or less than a tumbril was now that most glorious form of transport in the world—a conveyance to take us home to our tea. We ran down the hill cheering, blessing the driver's name.

A handful of our allies were already aboard. As we rocketed away down what appeared to be a dried-up water-course we asked them how they had fared. "Well," they said cheerfully, "we think we're dead, but the driver says we are reinforcements." At this our Platoon Sergeant looked worried, and forced his way towards the front of the lorry. There he hung head downwards over the cab and engaged the driver in conversation. We shied horribly as the man caught sight of the apparition but steadied up in time to avoid carrying away most of a small coppice.

"What are we supposed to be?" roared the Sergeant, holding his hat on and swinging like a pendulum. After a pause he exploded, "Don't talk like a fool, man!" and drew himself back into our midst. There was a misunderstanding of some sort, apparently; the driver maintained that we were being rushed up to support the enemy. . . .

The track narrowed. Rhododendrons on both sides of us were exerting more and more pressure against the lorry, and it was presently noticed that ahead of us the flowers were massed in a solid phalanx, seemingly impenetrable. We did not slacken speed, and a moment later the wall of pink blossoms loomed up and crashed upon us, tearing off our hats and filling our covered wagon with petals and small branches. The next minute, with a jerk that all but compressed the front passengers into a jelly, we shuddered to a standstill. We were in open country again, and a great gathering was arrayed before us. It looked very informal. We fell out of the lorry cautiously, combing the flowers from

our hair and wondering which side we were on.

The assembly towards which we reeled and staggered proved to be an inquest on the battle. The umpires were about to give evidence.

We listened, at first with misgivings, but later with pride, to the tale of our achievements. We had done our work well, it seemed. The enemy (now rubbing shoulders with us, chewing grass and throwing us interested glances) had been exterminated according to plan. Our Platoon was specially commended for its cunning in rushing up reinforcements at a critical moment—reinforcements which, if it had not been decided to break off the exercise just about then, would have been a decisive factor in the British victory.

Altogether a very successful afternoon. One or two of our own high officers made speeches. One or two Army officers replied. Over all the sun burned down from a perfect sky; the birds sang, a rabbit scuttled home to its tea without a glance for the weapons of destruction lining its route; and as far as the eye could see the blaze of rhododendrons stretched away into the haze.

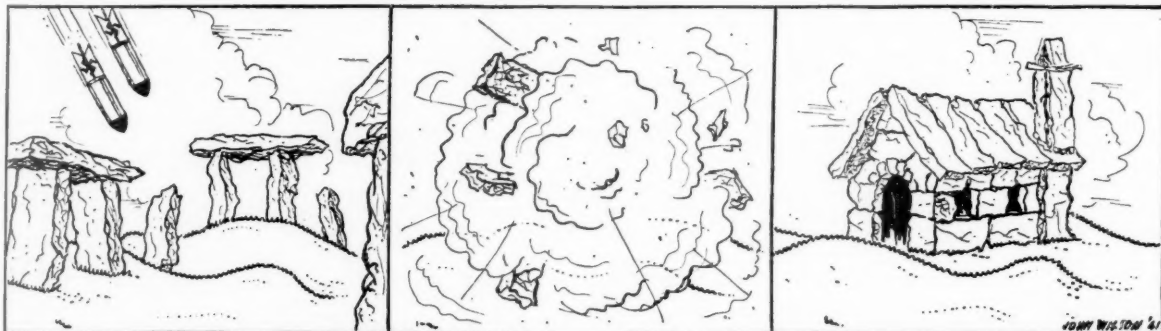
"Nice part, this," said little Mr. King appreciatively, as we trudged back to the lorry.

Mr. Benn agreed that it was "a pretty bit," and added that the "rhodos" were looking nice.

"Pardon?" said little Mr. King, whose thoughts were turning to tea.

"I said the rhododendrons were nice. They were a fair picture in Crete, the papers said."

"Oh, ah?" said little Mr. King.



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